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ABSTRACT

In preparation for Secretary Speakout '87, a 50-statement questionnaire was sent to 2,000 randomly selected members of Professional Secretaries International, the National Association of Legal Secretaries, the National Association of Educational Office Personnel, and the National Association of Rehabilitation Secretaries. Respondents were asked to evaluate their perceptions of secretarial duties, office structure, company responsibilities, office environment, and status of the profession in the year 2020. Six hundred questionnaires were tabulated by computer and analyzed. Some of the results were as follows: (1) secretaries foresee themselves as managers of information with desktop publishing responsibilities and strong interpersonal skills; (2) many traditional secretarial duties will be performed by voice-activated computers; (3) secretaries think that employees will be trained by videotape, all secretaries will have personal computers, and dictation and transcription will be obsolete; (4) they disagree on whether offices will be paperless, whether teleconferencing and videoconferencing will replace face-to-face meetings, and whether secretaries will work at home; (5) respondents are divided on what they think the company should provide and what it will provide in such areas as day care, profit-sharing, and executive perquisites for secretaries; (6) secretaries think that problems with drugs, alcohol, and sexual harassment will still exist in the workplace and that automation would not be a panacea for productivity; and (7) professional status for the secretarial field is the top priority of two-thirds of the respondents, although less than half agree that a college education should be required for secretaries or that secretaries should be certified. (KC)

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IN THE YEAR 2020

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Secretary Speakout®'87

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THE FUTURE

How do secretaries view the office in the year 2020? In preparation for Secretary Speakout '87, A Profession in Motion, the Speakout Task Force thought it would be interesting to find out.

A questionnaire was sent to 2,000 randomly-selected members of Professional Secretaries International, National Association of Legal Secretaries (International), National Association of Educational Office Personnel, and National Association of Rehabilitation Secretaries. Participants were asked to "agree," "strongly agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree" with 50 statements about the office of the future. A total of 600 questionnaires were tabulated by computer and analyzed.

This survey was not intended to be a definitive body of research on the office in the year 2020 but tests attitudes and perceptions of secretaries toward the office of the future.

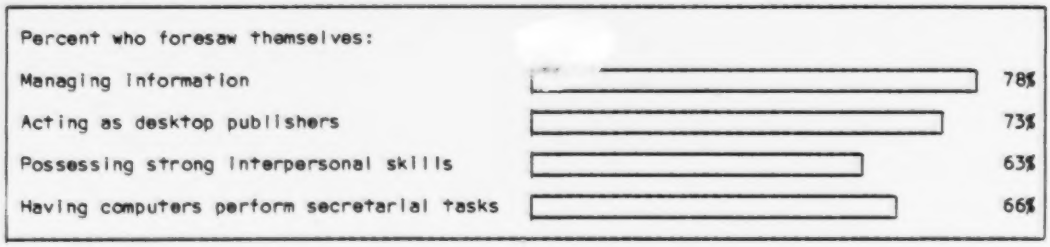
Adella C. LaRue

Adella C. LaRue CPS, President
Professional Secretaries International and
Chairman, Secretary Speakout '87 Task Force

This survey looked at five categories. Respondents were asked to evaluate their perceptions of secretarial duties, office structure, company responsibilities, office environment, and status of the profession in the year 2020.

Secretarial Duties

Secretaries foresaw themselves as managers of information with desktop publishing responsibilities and strong interpersonal skills. They said traditional secretarial duties would be performed by voice-activated computers.



Office Structure

Respondents were asked questions to elicit how they saw the office structure in the year 2020.

They agreed:	Percentage
Seminar videoconferencing would be most common method of training employees	84%
Every secretarial desk would have a personal computer or terminal	98%
Secretaries would staff space stations	71%
Dictation and transcription would be obsolete	82%
Secretaries would have terminals in home	68%
They disagreed:	
Robots would function as assistants to secretaries	70%

Four questions in this group were fairly evenly split over whether respondents agreed or disagreed to their probability in the year 2020.

	Percentage Agreed	Percentage Disagreed
Computerized files will create a paperless office	60	40
Teleconferencing and videoconferencing will replace face-to-face meetings	53	47
VDT usage will be limited to four hours per day	44	56
Secretaries will work on terminals at home instead of office	56	44

Company Responsibilities

Respondents were divided on what they thought the company <u>would</u> provide and what they thought the company <u>should</u> provide.

Sixty-one percent thought the company <u>should</u> provide child-care services as an employee benefit.

One-third thought the company <u>would</u> provide equal sharing of performance-based monies among secretaries and executives.

Sixty-one percent thought the company <u>should</u> provide executive perks for secretaries.

One-half thought the company <u>would</u> provide structured exercise periods.
Eighty-eight percent thought the company <u>should</u> pay professional membership dues.

Respondents thought other responsibilities the company <u>would</u> undertake include:	Percentage
Employ part-time and temporary secretaries	69
Mandate drug testing	73
Make employee training second only to productivity	70

Office Environment

This category included some of the most futuristic questions and respondents' answers were closely tied to issues in today's office environment.

More than three-fourths thought there should be equal pay for equal work and that drugs and alcohol would be a continuing problem in the workplace. Seventy-four percent thought sexual harassment would still be a problem in 2020. More than three-fourths thought automation would not turn out to be a panacea for productivity and eighty-eight percent thought education and training should be a lifelong process to maintain employment.

Some futuristic trends secretaries refused to consider. Eighty-eight percent said no to brain implants to enhance memory and alter emotional states. Two-thirds refused to consider a money-less society. Seventy-one percent said no to a twenty-five hour work week and only one-third thought secretaries would change careers every five years.

Brain Implants

Money-Less Society

Two questions brought a divided response. Forty-two percent versus fifty-six percent thought female managers would outnumber male managers in 2020 and fifty-one percent versus forty-nine percent thought the retirement age should be 75.

The one scenario secretaries overwhelmingly agreed would happen in 2020 was a secretary/manager team course would be required for business graduates.

Status of the Profession

Professional status for the secretarial field was top priority with two-thirds of the respondents. Three-fourths saw secretaries taking part in long-term strategic plans. Eighty percent foresaw secretaries moving up to become chief executive officers and eighty-four percent said secretaries should affect quality control through secretarial councils.

Secretaries networking internationally through computers was favored by ninety-two percent.

Three-fourths of those interviewed thought secretaries would be regarded as middle managers in 2020 and that secretarial salaries would be more than double what they are today.

Contradictory scenarios were envisioned by survey participants when two-thirds agreed the secretarial profession would be notable for career advancement but only one-third saw the number of students entering the field increase by 200 percent.

Participants (86%) were adamant that the role of the secretary would be more important in 2020 than today.

Although respondents thought secretaries should be considered professionals, not all were willing to take those steps which would help insure professionalism. Only one-half thought secretaries should be required to be certified. Forty-one percent thought secretarial jobs should require a four-year college degree and only one-third thought membership should be required in a professional association. Bilingualism for executive secretaries was thought a necessity by only forty-two percent.

Agreed:	Percentage
Secretaries should be required to be certified	46%
Secretarial jobs should require a 4-year degree	41%
Secretaries should be required to have membership in professional association	36%
Bilingualism shoud be a prerequisite for executive secretarial positions	42%

Responsibility and accountability were agreed essential qualities in 2020 by a majority of secretaries. Two-thirds said secretaries should be legally responsible for their actions and almost three-fourths said a secretary's number one loyalty should be professional rather than personal.